

that the glare of lamps was no longer needed to light up the festal scene.

Mrs. Franklin Irving had been invited to be present, but she wisely declined, and sent instead a most exquisite ring to Magdalen, who let Frank put it upon her finger and kiss her hand as he did so, a privilege he claimed because the ring was said to be his gift and Bell's. His wife had conceded so much to him, though Frank had known nothing of the ring until he saw it in its velvet box on his wife's bureau. Unlike her, he had no feelings of delicacy to prevent his being present at Roger's bridal party. With no business on his hands, and nothing to expect from his wife beside his board, he was quite as willing to stay at Millbank as in Boston, and seemed to take it for granted that he was welcome there. And nobody cared much about his movements except Hester, who wondered "Why the lazy lout didn't go to work and earn his own vittles, instead of hangin' on to Roger. She vummed if she'd stay it much longer. She'd set him to work if Roger didn't."

And so as time went on and Frank still lingered about the place, Hester gradually impressed him into her service, and made him do some of the things which Aleck once had done and which he was unable to do now. Sometimes he brought water for her, or split her kindlings, or went to the village on an errand, and did it willingly, too, though he always wore his gloves, and generally carried his cane and eye-glass, which last article he had of late adopted. It was Magdalen who finally interfered and stood between Hester and Frank, and said he was welcome to remain at Millbank as long as he chose, and that if Hester had not servants enough another should be procured at once. This was the first and only time that Magdalen asserted her right as mistress in opposition to old Hester, who submitted without a word and ever after left Frank in peace.

September passed quickly, and in the late October days, when the New England woods were gorgeous with crimson and gold, and Millbank was still beautiful with its autumn flowers, Mrs. Franklin Irving came up to visit Mr. and Mrs. Roger, and was received by her with all the cordiality due so near a relative. Not by a word or look did she betray the slightest regret for the past, when she had been mistress where she was now only a guest. Millbank was to her as any stranger's house, and she bore herself naturally and pleasantly, and made herself very agreeable to Roger, and devoted herself to Magdalen, whom she liked so much, and was civil and almost kind to her hus-

band, who was still there, and, as Hester said, "just as shiftless as ever."

Bell saw the state of affairs, and while she despised her husband more than ever for his indolence and lack of sensibility, she resolved to give Magdalen a rest, and leave her alone with Roger for a time; so when in November she returned to Boston, she invited Frank to go with her, and secured him a place as book-keeper in a merchant's counting-house, and stimulated perhaps by the perfect happiness and confidence she had seen existing between Roger and Magdalen, tried, by being kind and even deferential to him, to mould him into something of which she would not be so terribly ashamed as she was now of the careless, shambling, listless, lazy man, whom everybody knew as Mrs. Franklin Irving's husband.

## CHAPTER LVII.

### CHRISTMAS-TIDE.

It was the second Christmas after Magdalen's bridal, and fires were kindled in all the rooms at Millbank, and pantries and closets groaned with their loads and loads of eatables; and Hester Floyd bustled about, important as ever, ordering everybody except the nurse who had come with Mrs. Guy Seymour and her baby, the little four-months old girl, whose name was Laura Magdalen, and who, with her warm milk and cold milk, and numerous paraphernalia of babyhood, kept the kitchen a good deal stirred up, and made Hester chafe a little inwardly. But then, she said "she 'sposed she must get used to these things," and her face cleared up, and her manner was very soft and gentle every time she thought of the crib in Magdalen's room, where, under the identical quilt the poor heathen would never receive, slumbered another baby girl. Magdalen's and Roger's, which had come to Millbank about six weeks before, and over whose birth great rejoicings were made. *Jessie Morton* was its name, and Guy and Alice had stood for it the Sunday before, and with Aunt Pen were to remain at Millbank through the holidays, and help Magdalen to entertain the few friends invited to pass the week under Roger's hospitable roof.

The world had gone well with Roger since he came back to Millbank. Everything had prospered with which he had anything to do. The shoe shop had been rebuilt, and the mill was never more prosperous, and Roger bade fair soon to be as rich a man as he had supposed himself to be before the will was found. On his domestic horizon no cloud, however small, had ever rested. Magdalen